

Article - Public Utilities

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§7-307.

(a) In this section, “termination of service” means the termination, reduction, or refusal to reinstate gas or electric service, or any other action that has the effect of reducing or denying gas or electric service because of nonpayment.

(b) (1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection, the Commission shall adopt regulations concerning the prohibition against or limitation of authority of a public service company to terminate service for gas or electricity to a low income residential customer during the heating season for nonpayment.

(2) In adopting the regulations required under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the Commission shall consider and may include provisions relating to:

(i) the circumstances under which service may and may not be limited or terminated;

(ii) the minimum heating levels required to maintain life, health, and safety;

(iii) the medical, age, disabling, or other individual characteristics that are relevant to a prohibition against or limitation on the termination of service;

(iv) the availability of and qualification for State and federal energy assistance;

(v) the financial eligibility standards relevant to a prohibition against or limitation on the termination of service;

(vi) the availability and appropriateness of equipment designed to limit the flow of service for gas or electricity;

(vii) the short-term and long-term alternative payment plans, for appropriate customers whose accounts are in arrears, that are best designed:

and

1. to allow present and future continuation of service;

2. to encourage full payment over a period of time;

(viii) the methods that a public service company might use before and during the heating season to anticipate customer nonpayment, to assist those customers, and to avoid termination of service;

(ix) the procedures that a public service company uses to mitigate the problems of termination of service to customers, including customer contact;

(x) the procedure that a public service company shall follow before termination of service to a customer to avoid a threat to life, health, or safety;

(xi) the appropriate customer notice before the termination of service;

(xii) the appropriate opportunity and procedure for a customer to contest a proposed termination of service;

(xiii) the existence of other circumstances that because of an emergency, might justify a prohibition against or a limitation on the termination of service; and

(xiv) the economic implication of any restriction on termination of service.

(c) (1) In accordance with § 2–1246 of the State Government Article, on or before September 1 of each year, the Commission shall report to the General Assembly on terminations of service by public service companies during the previous heating season.

(2) The report shall include information in sufficient detail to indicate the effect of the terminations of service on various categories of customers, including:

(i) income levels;

(ii) geographic areas;

(iii) energy assistance recipients; and

(iv) any other category that the Commission determines is relevant to evaluate how the State may best address the problem of assuring adequate gas and electric service for low income residential customers.

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